

Tip #14

beyond the front yard: creating safer streets and play places for children



Crawling... walking... bike riding... in-line and roller skating. As babies grow into school kids, they move farther and faster. They love to be on the move -- to the neighbor's house, the school yard, the park, or the store! These activities are great for your children, if your neighborhood has safe playgrounds, sidewalks, and streets.

Young children need safe places for active play (A), yet many communities today are not kid-friendly.

Children over ten years old need safe ways to get themselves to school, sports events, and stores. When they walk or cycle, you-the parent-help your children learn responsibility and independence.

There are things YOU can do to make these outings safer! Slower traffic, nearby parks, and better sidewalks help everyone in the neighborhood. Older people and those with limited mobility will also appreciate these improvements.

How pedestrian-friendly are your neighborhood streets?

Take a walk in your neighborhood with your child. Look at the conditions along the way. You may want to score your area using the "Walkability Checklist." (See the back page for more information on how to get it.)

As you walk, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there places for people to walk (or for children to bicycle) off the street? (B)
- Are there places to cross streets easily and safely? Are there crossing guards near schools?
- Are the drivers courteous? Do they obey speed limits?
- Was your walk pleasant? Would you do it again?

Check below any problems that you find:

- ☐ Traffic speeds are too high.
- ☐ No sidewalks or wide shoulders for walking (B).
- ☐ Roadside obstructions make walking difficult (parked cars, trash bins, overgrown bushes, ditches).
- ☐ No crosswalks or traffic signals where we want to cross busy streets.
- ☐ Drivers do not stop for pedestrians.
- ☐ No place for children to play.
- ☐ Playgrounds, library, and schools are too far away.

